



## Dorm offers refuge for recovering drug addicts

By Wade Coggeshall

PLAINFIELD— Before his incarceration, Derrick Arp says he was a “sick individual.”

That was mainly due to his drug use.

“I was dead on the inside,” he said.

His confinement, going on two years now, may have saved the public from him, but it took something more to protect him from himself.

That something is a new, stronger commitment by the Indiana Department of Correction to address drug addiction.

Jerry Vance, the substance abuse director for the IDOC, says about 87 percent of the prison population deals with some kind of drug addiction. It’s also one of the main reasons for recidivism.

“It’s got to be addressed,” Vance said.

It is, through therapeutic communities, outpatient treatment, and Clean Lifestyle Is Freedom Forever (CLIFF) units. In just the past couple years, the IDOC has added more than 1,000 therapeutic beds for inmates. That, coupled with the outpatient services, has already served thousands within the system.

Community re-entry is a main focus of the department. The Plainfield Re-Entry Facility (PREF) opened a therapeutic dorm at the end of June.

Housed in the Seibold dorm, the program started with 10 participants and is now up to its high of 18. Residents are each given a specific job title. That’s in addition to the jobs and schools they attend on the outside.

“We have a lot of people interested in moving into the dorm, to continue their recovery,” said Elvin Taylor, a substance abuse counselor. “It’s pretty popular with most of the residents.”

Even so, some have been forced to leave because of disciplinary issues. Each inmate must go through an interview process before he can be accepted. Some are referred.

“We try to be stringent on the guys we allow back there,” Taylor said. “But every once in a while, you get a bad apple.”

This program isn’t really new to the residents. They’ve already been through other therapeutic sessions. They have the tools they need to deal with their addictions.

And yet sometimes it’s still not enough.

“Addiction is a life-long disease,” said Taylor, himself a recovering addict, 11 years now. “I have a lot of reasons why I do what I do. My main goal here is to plant some seeds. I can’t change anybody. All I can do is give them the tools and encourage them to do better.”

Substance abuse often starts with falling into the wrong crowd. Just as often, it takes the right kind of social network to recover from it.

“They have the same mind-set,” said Derrick Arp of his Seibold dorm-mates. “We can help each other. Whenever someone’s having a bad day, I can recognize that. A lot of dorms you don’t see that. It’s more like (a mentality of) I’ve got to look out for No. 1.”

Arp considers residency in Seibold a privilege. Only those who want to change can get better.

“The hardest part of change is battling your own demons,” Arp said.

Robert Rich, another Seibold resident, added, “You can’t fake it to make it here.”

Every aspect of his substance abuse treatment has given Arp a renewed sense of inspiration. He’s currently attending culinary school, with aspirations of getting into the restaurant business after his release. Thomas Wakes, currently a resident in Seibold, says it’s helped him set goals too. That goal is to “help others who have been on drugs. I want to set a good example. I don’t want them to end up here.”

Taylor believes everyone in Seibold is setting a positive example.

“I tell the guys now, this is the foundation,” he said. “What you do now, you’re doing for the guys who come after you.”

Vance hopes to open a second therapeutic dorm at PREF. Taylor would like to see the whole campus become a safe haven for recovering addicts. For now, immediate plans include adding mentoring and tutoring programs, and having more community leaders come in to talk with the group.

“We really haven’t started to get on a roll yet,” Taylor said. “But I believe we will in time.”

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